



OR GEMS OF

LITERATURE, WIT AND SENTIMENT.

We will revive those times, and in our memories
Preserve, and still keep fresh, like flowers in water,
Those happier days; when at our eyes our souls
Kindled their mutual fires, their equal beams
Shot and returned, till link'd and twin'd in one,
They chained our hearts together.—DENHAM.

No. 10.]

PHILADELPHIA.—OCTOBER.

[1831.

THE OLD CENTRE HOUSE,
WITH AN ENGRAVING.

In the year 1685, at the south west corner of the Centre Square, the Society of Friends erected a brick meeting house, sixty feet long by forty feet broad. The situation at that time was far out of town, but it was selected because it was thought that the Schuylkill river would attract as many inhabitants to the western part of the city, as the Delaware would to the eastern. It was surrounded by a dense natural forest of oak and hickories, which afforded excellent game in great abundance to the sportsmen of those days. This meeting was, we believe, the first built by Friends. They used it only as a day meeting, having a building appropriated to evening meetings in Front above Arch street. This they commenced immediately after the completion of the Centre Square meeting house, finding the distance too great for an evening walk. To the primitive inhabitants it must have appeared a long distance, as, under a fine shade at the corner of High and Sixth street, then far out of town, they had erected a resting seat, expressly for the accommodation of the eastern inhabitants, which they called the "half way rest."

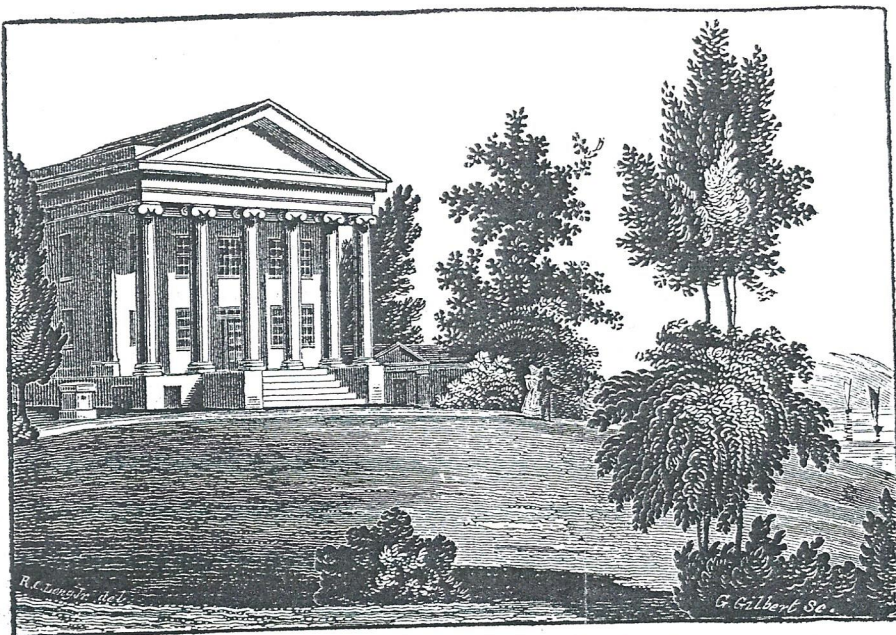
The meeting house was occupied for a considerable length of time, but eventually falling into decay, was not rebuilt, as its distance from the thickly settled parts of the city, gave rise to so much inconvenience. Settlements on the Schuylkill were not made with as much rapidity as was anticipated, as experiments showed that the river was navigable only for vessels of a certain class. After the building was removed, the woods were reserved as the property of Penn, he conceding, however, that they should remain open as commons to the west of Broad street, until he should be prepared to settle the premises.

At the time the British possessed Philadelphia, in the winter of 1777—8, the woods were freely used by the army. Some of the best trees were cut down and destroyed, and when they left it, it was deemed advisable to clear the whole.—

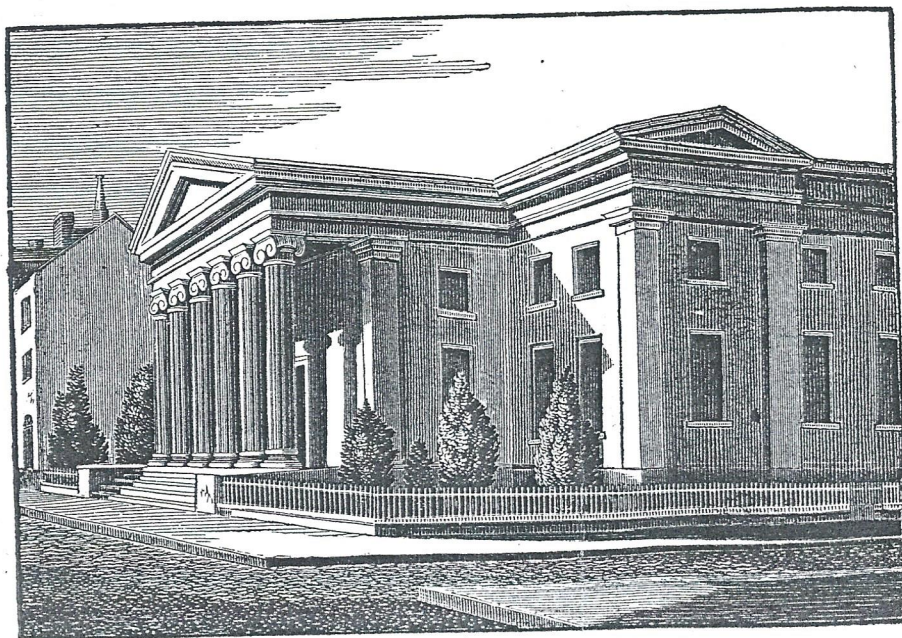
Centre Square soon after became noted as the gallows ground, and to the boys became an object of universal terror. Various legends of hobgoblins, witches, &c. were soon in circulation, and but few under sixteen would trust themselves in the neighbourhood after nightfall. It was generally used as training ground for the military companies of the city.

The building of which the appended plate is a representation, was not commenced until 1799. For some years previous to that time the attention of citizens had been directed to procuring a permanent supply of good water. Repeated attacks of an awful epidemic had aroused the public mind to a sense of the importance of a copious supply of water for the health as well as cleanliness of the city. In 1797, petitions were addressed to councils, signed by an unprecedented number of citizens, urging the adoption of some plan to introduce water in all the streets. Various schemes were proposed: the chief of which were,—the completion of the canal, intended to unite the Delaware and the Schuylkill—conducting hither the water of Spring Mill, fifteen miles N. N. W. of Philadelphia—and, to make a reservoir upon the banks of the Schuylkill, to throw up a sufficient quantity of water into a tunnel, and to carry it thence to a reservoir in Centre Square. This last plan was proposed by Mr. Latrobe, and, after much deliberation, councils determined upon adopting it.

Preparations were immediately entered into to procure steam engines for raising the water, tunnels and pipes, to convey it through the city, and for the erection of a suitable building in Centre Square. Money was raised with some difficulty; but on the 2d of May, 1799, the first sod was dug, and although a dreadful epidemic fever prevailed in the succeeding autumn, the work went on without interruption. On the 21st of January, 1801, the first water was thrown into the city, about one mile of pipes being then laid. The purposes to which this building was applied are as follows: A steam engine was placed on



PELHAM—RODMAN'S NECK, NEW YORK.



NEW UNITED STATES MINT, PHILADELPHIA.

PELHAM—RODMAN'S NECK, N. Y.

The seat of E. W. King, Esq.

This beautiful edifice is fifty feet in breadth and sixty-two in depth, composed of stone. It is entirely of the Grecian order, and was planned by, and executed under the superintendence of, Mr. Martin E. Thompson, Architect, of New York, in the year 1828-9. The Lawn is enriched with almost every variety of tree and shrub, and its arrangement is one of the happiest efforts of the late distinguished Landscape Gardener, Mr. Andrew Parmentier, of Brooklyn. It is situated on a point of land jutting into the East River, or Long Island Sound, in Pelham, about sixteen miles east of New York; and is the property of E. W. King, Esquire.

The situation is peculiarly picturesque; in the rear are woodlands of great height; having one ravine, through which the banks of the Hudson are visible; on the east and west the shores are skirted with seats of uncommon beauty. In front are three small inhabited Islands of great fertility. The river affords an ever varying scene of vessels, with sails and steamers passing to and from the great commercial emporium of the west.

MINT OF THE UNITED STATES.

A resolution in favour of the establishment of a Mint, was adopted by the old Congress on the 21st of February, 1782. The question it appears was at different periods resumed under the Confederation, and on the 16th October, 1786, an ordinance was passed on the subject, which, however, was not carried into effect. The Mint of the United States was eventually instituted at Philadelphia, by an act of Congress, under the Federal Constitution, passed the 2d day of April, 1792, and a few specimens of half dimes were issued before the close of that year. Early in 1793, the general operations of the establishment were commenced, in a very plain dwelling house, purchased for the object, on the east side of Seventh street, between High and Mulberry streets. A rude structure, in the rear of the same lot, was also occupied by a portion of the machinery. In this simple, unpretending style, the institution began its transactions, under the patronage of General Washington, then President of the United States, who duly appreciated its importance, and evinced, by occasional visits, his interest in its prosperity.

During the first few years, the supply of the precious metals, offered for coinage, being very limited, the annual expenditures of the Mint appeared disproportioned to its productiveness, and the general policy of such an establishment was more than once made a question in Congress. The steadfastness of public opinion in its favour, however, sustained it under these discouraging aspects; and it is worthy of remembrance as an example of republican constancy, that even the characteristic and highly liberal feature of the institution, the coinage of both gold and silver free of charge, was inviolably maintained. National in its character and its objects, the institution is supported by the public treasury for the general good; and depositors of gold or silver bullion, of standard fineness, receive, without expense, an equal weight in gold or silver coins.

The average annual coinage of the Mint, from its commencement to the end of the year 1809, was in round numbers, \$362,000. The average of the next ten years, ending with 1810, was \$697,000. That of the succeeding ten years, ending with 1820, may be stated at \$1,166,000, and that of the ten years ending with 1830, at \$1,850,000. The whole coinage, from the establishment of the Mint to the end of the year 1830, may be stated at \$37,000,000.

With the progressive increase of the supply of bullion, the accommodations of the Mint were from time to time enlarged by partial additions; but an extension of power commensurate with the increasing demand for coinage, under the expanding operations of the Bank of the United States, it became apparent, could not be effected by these expedients. In 1827, the bullion deposited by that bank alone, exceeded the whole supply from all other sources in any previous year; and the whole coinage of that year exceeded three millions of dollars. These impressive facts rendered it indispensably necessary to solicit the consideration of Congress to the expediency of a more extended establishment. This was done in a communication from the Director, addressed to the Hon. John Sergeant, chairman of the committee on the Mint of the House of Representatives, December 23d, 1828. On the 2d of March, 1829, the measure received the sanction of the government; and a liberal provision was made for its accomplishment.

Under this provision a lot was purchased, with the approbation of the President, fronting towards the south on Chesnut street, and towards the north on Penn Square, 150 feet, and extending along Juniper street 204 feet. On this site, on the 4th of July, 1829, was laid the corner stone of the Mint of the United States.

The building is of white marble, from designs furnished by Mr. Strickland. It fronts on Chesnut street, Penn Square, and Juniper street. Its dimensions are 123 feet on the fronts. The flanks, exclusive of the porticos, 139 feet—projection of the porticos each 27 feet—whole flank, 193 feet. The two porticos are each 60 feet in front, containing six columns on Chesnut street, and a like number on Penn Square.

The order is Ionic, taken from that celebrated Grecian Temple on the Illyssus, near Athens. The columns are three feet in diameter, fluted, and bound at the neck of the capital with an olive wreath. The entablature of the porticos extends entirely round the fronts and flanks of the building, supported by antæ at the corners, and surmounted at the extremes of the flanks by four pediments.

The building consists of a basement, principal, and attic stories. The officers' rooms, vaults, &c. on the Chesnut street front, and part of the western flank, are arched in a complete fire-proof manner. The roof is entirely of copper, and covers the whole area of the building, with the exception of a court yard in the centre of the interior pile. The court is 55 feet by 84 feet, and is designed to afford a free communication, by means of piazzas in each story, with all parts of the building, and to give additional light to the various apartments contained within its walls.

The entrance from the south portico is into a

circular vestibule, communicating, immediately, with the apartments of the Director and Treasurer, and the arched passages with those of the Chief Coiner, Melter, and Refiner, and with the rooms for receiving bullion and delivering coins. These passages communicate also by a marble stair-case in each wing, with the attic story, where are the apartments of the Assayers and Engravers.

The east flank and north section of the edifice contains the rooms appropriated to the operations of the Chief Coiner. The west flank contains those appropriated to the operations of the Melter and Refiner.

In the distribution of the interior of the edifice, no sacrifice has been made of utility to mere display. Solidity of structure, symmetry of arrangement, and a due adaptation of the several apartments to their destined uses, have been chiefly kept in view. Apartments designed for the accommodation of individual officers, are of dimensions merely sufficient for that purpose. Where extended space was essential, this has been finely appropriated.

The important processes of the assay are accordingly provided for, in two suites of rooms, each extending 50 feet by 20. The operations of the Melter and Refiner are accommodated in a range of apartments extending 95 feet by 32. The principal melting room is an apartment of 37 feet by 32, and the process of gold and silver parting, for which a contracted space would be peculiarly unfit, is provided for in an apartment of 53 feet by 32.

The preparatory operations of the Chief Coiner are accommodated in two rooms for laminating ingots, of 55 feet by 40, opening to the north portico; the propelling steam power being placed in the basement story. A range of apartments extending 120 feet by 32, is appropriated to the more immediate operations of coining, and the machinery connected therewith. The principal coining room extends 37 feet by 32, being sufficiently capacious to contain ten coining presses.

A distinct suite of three rooms in the attic story, extending 58 feet along the south main front, claims a brief notice. Here are preserved the standard weights of the Mint, and the balances for adjusting those in ordinary use. The central room is lighted through the dome, and is intended as a cabinet for the safe keeping of selected coins and medals, and also of mineral and metallic specimens instructive on the subject of metallurgy, and especially in regard to the precious metals. These apartments communicate with each other by ample folding doors, thus affording a spacious and appropriate accommodation to the commissioners of the annual assay appointed for that purpose of testing the conformity of the coins issued yearly from the Mint, with the standard weight and fineness of the coins of the United States as established by law.

The Mint was established "for the purpose of a national coinage," with provisions obviously designed to attract, by liberal facilities, an influx of the precious metals sufficient for an abundant currency. The reports of the Director to the President of the United States, laid annually before Congress, and from which the preceding statements of its issues are collated, exhibit the

extent to which the purposes of the institution have been accomplished, hitherto, with imperfect means; and offer an auspicious promise of higher usefulness, under its extended powers, in future years.

Written for the Casket.

THE FIRST NIGHT IN THE GRAVE.

The first night in the grave! Oh, what a chill
Runs through the mourning heart at the drear thought!
Nor can it realise, in its new grief,
That the poor suffering and mortal part
Of what it lov'd is now insensible.
Oh, with what anxious vigilance was nurs'd
The feeble and emaciated frame,
With tears, lest e'en a breath should rudely blow;
Lest e'en a footstep's fall should agitate;
Or sound dissonant jar the fine-strung nerve!
And care that e'en the lamp should throw around
its shadows gracefully! Now, for ever
Ended, such cares and such solicitude!
That form has laid upon its bed of death.
The chamber lone, dark, desolate, and cold;
Perhaps the night wind blowing on the breast;
And it has been conveyed and lower'd down
To its long home,—its drear, its last abode.

Can it at once be realized, that now
The soul inhabits not its earthly house?
That the eye, which beamed with love, and sweetness,
And intelligence; the ear, which listened
To the dear voice of hope, of sympathy,
And to the melody of song; the voice,
That voice whose accents sunk into the soul,
Wakening the thrill of joy and sorrow;
That heart, the home of feeling and of truth,
Which throbb'd with but benevolence and love;
That these are powerless, all insensate
As the valley's clod. The pure spirit's flight,
The mind in vain attempts to trace. Earth chains
The mournful captive. Cheerlessly it sinks
Upon the grave, in mute and cold despair.
The first night in the grave! Oh, let not thought
There rest; but in faith and triumph holy
Now rejoice, that, mortal shackles dropped,
The soul be lov'd inhales celestial air,
And takes her first, her rapt, unclouded view
Of heavenly glory, and unending bliss!

ARODA.

From the Englishman's Magazine.

SONG.

"I know that he loves me."

I know that he loves me—I could not live on,
Though loved by a thousand, if his love were gone;
But my soul with the thought bounds in rapture no more,
For alas! though he loves me, 'tis not as of yore!

No wonder the shadow oft steals o'er my brow,
When I think what he was, and see what he is now!
Tho' they say his is true as heart e'er was before,
I feel that he loves me—ah! not as of yore!

Time was when he watch'd every glance every tone,
And made my emotions the guide of his own;
When he look'd fond alarm if I heaved but a sigh,
And his cheek lost its rose when a tear dimm'd my eye!

But now, if I weep, he just asks, why so sad?
And says when I sorrow he cannot be glad;
Oh! so calmly he speaks of the gloom of my mind,
His voice never falters—it only is kind.

Yet I know that he loves me—I feel there is none
That he loves half as well, or could love were I gone;
But in solitude often my tears will run o'er,
To think, tho' he loves me, 'tis not as of yore.

Oh! why does the rainbow so soon fleet away,
And affection's fresh beauty so quickly decay?
Why must time from the spirit its summer glow steal,
Why, as once we have felt, can we not ever feel!

Though lovely the fall of mild evening may be,
O! the light and the glory of morning for me!
'Twas a vision of bliss, but its brightness is o'er,
And I weep that he loves me—ah! not as of yore!